In the Specification:

Please amend paragraph [0019] as follows:

[0019] Fig. 2A shows a cross-section of a hard mask layer 202 that is formed atop a substrate (not shown), which may be a pad ~~nitrate~~ nitride layer formed over a pad oxide layer and over a silicon substrate as described above. A resist layer 204, such as a photoresist or other resist, is deposited atop the layer 202. Then, as Fig. 2C shows, a portion of the resist is exposed in a known manner, such as by transmitting light through one or more openings in a mask into a projection lens to focus a pattern onto the substrate. When the resist is a negative resist, the periphery region 204a is exposed so that the unexposed region 204b may be subsequently removed when the resist is developed. Alternatively, when the resist is a positive resist, the region 204b is exposed and is removed when the resist is developed so that only the periphery region 204a remains. Fig. 2D illustrates the resist ring 206 that remains after the exposure and development steps.